175 of the empire. In the latter part of the fifteenth century (ca. 1470) the empire was consolidated and the city of Birni Ngazargamu was founded on the River Yobe. It remained the capital of the empire of Bornu for 350 years. In 1507 the former capital of Birni Njimi was recaptured and Kanem became a province of [172] Bornu. The site of Birni Ngazargamu is twenty-five miles from the present town of Geidam, and its extensive ruins can be seen today.

During the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, the empire reached its zenith. Its boundaries stretched to Fezzan in the north, beyond Kawar and Tibesti, to the Nile in an easterly direction, and to Dikwa and 175 the districts south of Lake Chad. Many minor states paid 177 [648] tribute to Bornu. At that time Bornu was in close contact with [487] both Egypt and Tripoli. Controlling the southern terminus of the shortest trans-Saharan caravan route, which ran from Tripoli through the Fezzan and the oasis of Bilma to Lake Chad and Birni Ngazargamu, the empire of Bornu was in regular contact with the [411] Mediterranean area in earliest times. Guns were introduced into Bornu from Tripoli at the end of the sixteenth century [179] and became a factor in the expansion of the empire. Via these established trade contacts, Islam came to Bornu in the eleventh [183] century. With the coming of Islam came also the tradition of study and learning which has persisted as a part of Kanuri culture.

175 The institution of slavery had always been a part of this
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369 tionably larger than anything found in Bornu today. However,
162 as in all pre-industrial societies, the bulk of the population is engaged in agriculture and lives in the many small villages dotting the plain.

361 One can never travel far in Bornu without encountering a
[491] village. Major villages are linked to one another and to towns
• [487] by laterite roads. Tiny villages are linked by a network of paths and tracks to one another. Surrounding each village
423 are the fields farmed by each family. Farm land can be had
425 by clearing the brush and making a plot ready for farming.
241 Since this is so easily done, land and its inheritance are not important determinants of the social structure. In theory,
[776] all land belongs to Allah and is in the hands of the Shehu of
[645] Bornu, the political and religious head of all Kanuri. The Shehu distributed large fiefs to Kanuri lords who gave the land to the village heads for distribution to individual villagers. In practice, any newcomer to a village has only to ask the village head for permission to farm and suitable land will be given to him which he must, of course, clear for planting. It naturally happens that those most recently arrived in a village will be given fields furthest from the houses, so that it is obvious that certain fields are more desirable than others. In a town of some size this becomes important. Distant fields may be up to three miles beyond the edge of town, and walking out and back each day to plant or to harvest is a demanding task.
241 Farm land, however, is never bought and sold. In the city this
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